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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2035
TAG PARM, PREL, NATO, IS, XF, GM
SUBJECT: ISRAELI DEPUTY FM FLAGS TOP CONCERN QME AND
MIDDLE EAST NUCLEAR FREE ZONE

Classified By: Political M/C George Glass for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (S) Summary. During a February 6 meeting on the margins of the Munich Security Conference, Israeli Deputy FM Ayalon told U/S Tauscher that his country's top security concerns were the Qualitative Military Edge (QME) and proposals for a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone. Ayalon also said that his government would provide a response to a USG nonpaper on elements for dealing with Egypt and Middle East issues at the upcoming NPT Review Conference. Tauscher emphasized the need to engage with Egypt, but promised that the U.S. would not put Israel on the spot in the course of its bilateral discussions with Cairo. Tauscher also suggested that the P3 Israel first agree on the scope of an agreement and then, perhaps, engage directly with Egyptian President Mubarak. End Summary.

NPT Revcon and Middle East Nuclear Free Zone

¶2. (S) Tauscher expressed concern about the prospects for a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference in light of the row over Iran's nuclear program and Egypt's controversial proposals on Middle East nuclear issues. In particular, Tauscher noted that Egypt had repeatedly disrupted prior RevCons over this issue without being made to pay a price. This year, she said, the USG wanted to be proactive and has begun engaging Egypt early in order to find a way forward. However, Tauscher emphasized that the U.S. would consult with Tel Aviv and not put Israel in a difficult position during the course of bilateral talks with Cairo. The goal, she said, would be to convince Egypt to abandon its normal approach to these issues and engage in a more productive dialogue on issues of concern in the Middle East and support U.S. objectives.

¶3. (S) Ayalon lamented continuing recalcitrance by Egyptian FM Aboul-Gheit on this issue and asked whether the U.S. had taken up this discussion directly with President Mubarak. Tauscher underscored that the U.S. had not yet engaged actively with Mubarak in order to first come to agreement with the P3 (U.S., UK, France) and Israel. Drilling down on tactics, Tauscher stressed that the U.S. did not intend to offer Egypt a compromise solution all at once but, instead, would offer different components contained in the elements papers during the course of negotiations. She also emphasized the need to reach agreement among the P3 Israel by the end of March -- at the latest. April, Tauscher stressed, would be too late to successfully engage with Egypt before

the NPT Revcon in May. As a result, the USG hoped for Israeli comments to its proposed negotiating strategy soon. Ayalon thanked U/S Tauscher for the clarification on the U.S. approach and promised to provide answers on the U.S. elements paper. He noted that Tel Aviv had been concerned that the U.S. would provide the whole paper to Egyptian officials, who could have pocketed those suggestions as an opening position.

Missile Defense

14. (S) Ayalon asked for an update on U.S. missile defense efforts as well as advances in MD in the Gulf states. Tauscher noted the recent agreement by Romania to host U.S. SM-3s as part of the Phased, Adaptive Approach and said the USG was working on a location for radar. Regarding MD in the Gulf states, Tauscher noted that UAE was acquiring THAADs, and that Kuwaiti, Bahraini, and Qatari had interest in Patriot missiles. Ayalon noted that Israel was working on its MD technology as well.

Russia Post START and Nuclear Treaties

15. (S) In response to questions about progress on concluding a new START agreement, Tauscher said the U.S. and Russia were about "95 percent" of the way there. Specifically, she noted, the technical annexes were cumbersome and were taking longer than expected. Tauscher also conveyed her expectation

BERLIN 00000193 002 OF 002

that post-START would likely be the only defense treaty ratified by the U.S. in 2010. The CTBT, she said would likely meet with lukewarm support in Congress this year. Meanwhile, Pakistan continued to block the start of FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

16. (U) This cable was cleared with U/S Tauscher.
Delawie